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LOCAL/Opinion

Section B
Sunday, August 9, 1987
Midland Reporter-Telegram

'Friendly forces' will soon storm Saragosa

Son joins father for rebuilding

By ED TODD
Staff Writer

SARAGOSA — Jose Candelas is helping his community rebuild even while he is awaiting the "big push" over the Labor Day weekend, when about 500 volunteers will be rebuilding Saragosa.

"I think it's a good thing, you know," said the 67-year-old merchant who lost his house and grocery-dry-goods store in the May 22 tornado that left 30 men, women and children dead and destroyed 81 houses. "It's real good for the people. I'll just wait my turn for the house" to be built by volunteers.

He plans to rebuild the store.

"Anyway, I'm going to try," he said. "I'm going to build my store myself. I lost everything, but my family is OK." His 10-wheel flat-bed truck, which he drove in hauling cantaloupes, chilies and onions, was wrecked by the raging storm. "Now, no chance," he sighed, of repairing the truck and again hauling produce.

Candelas, who has lived here since 1942, built the original store in 1950. It was the community's only store and now is marked by a United States flag waving in the breeze. "My flag is pretty."

The storekeeper and his family are living in temporary quarters in a mobile-home community, set up for the tornado's survivors, less than a mile from this Spanish-speaking Catholic community of mostly farm workers.

Candelas reflected on the sadness of a man's who lost his "life's work" to the tornado. "I've tried hard to make my life — to build my store."

"I don't have no money. I'm completely broke. But I'm going to try myself again."

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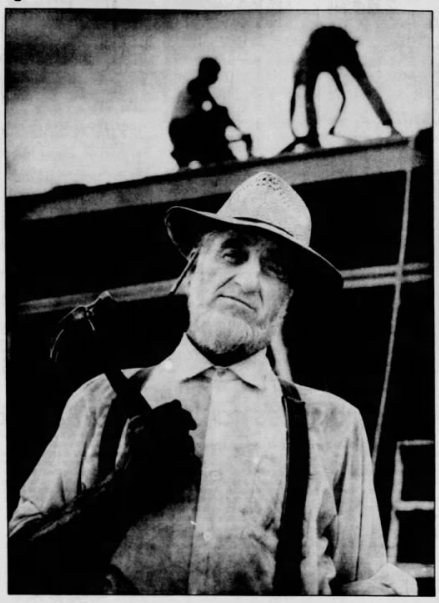

Mennonite farmer Alvin Yoder, 67, of Hutchinson, Kan., left, is among volunteers who are building houses to replace those destroyed in the May 22 Saragosa tornado. Saragosa merchant Jose Candelas, 67, stands at Old Glory, top right, which marks the site of his 1950-built store, which was destroyed in the May 22 tornado. He is assisted in reconstruction, above, by his son, Saul Candelas, 36, an El Paso educator.

Ed Todd/Reporter-Telegram

'Big push' scheduled Labor Day

By ED TODD
Staff Writer

SARAGOSA — The West Texas community of Saragosa, ravaged by a spring tornado, may be overwhelmed by an influx of friendly forces in September in a mission to rebuild the town.

About 500 church volunteers, mostly Baptists and Mennonites, will stage their "big push" over the long Labor Day weekend.

"It is just a job to be done that God wants us to do," said John LaNoue, the 52-year-old coordinator of the volunteer effort and associate director of the Dallas-based Texas Baptist Men, a branch of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. "And we're doing it with joy."

Since May 22, when the tornado destroyed much of this town, survival and rebuilding efforts have been underway. More than 60 houses and buildings — including a church, store, community center and school — were destroyed, and 30 lives were lost.

"God is using us and others who are volunteering as an expression of His love," LaNoue said. "God is the One who is getting it done."

A less ambitious building and repair program already is underway by Mennonites from Kansas and Baptists from Texas.

The Baptists, for example, built a house in Waco, dismantled it, hauled it to Saragosa, and re-assembled it here — complete with cabinets, carpeting, ceiling fans — a turn-key job, said LaNoue.

Just across the highway from the community center where several children and adults died, the Mennonites last week were finishing up a two-bedroom, 960-square-foot house.

"We feel that we can help our fellow man," said Vern Miller, a 47-year-old church layman-carpenter from Hutchinson, Kan. "We can put our faith into action by helping people who are in need."

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Ector County's attorney, DA embroiled in dispute

By FRANK TROMBLEY
Staff Writer

ODESSA — A dispute has erupted between two of Ector County's top law enforcement officials. Involved are a drug investigation, efforts to close a topless bar, allegations of police corruption and a federal investigation of organized gambling in the Ector County area.

The dispute grows out of a proposal by the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission to revoke the license of an Odessa topless bar because of alleged drug sales, the result of an initial investigation into alleged corruption on the part of a police officer, who was instrumental in investigating a gambling operation that led to the arrest of several friends and acquaintances of Ector County Attorney Gary Garrison.

Thursday afternoon, Garrison issued a prepared statement concerning his investigation into alleged police corruption he says he began about 18 months ago "after being approached by officers of the Odessa Police Department who made startling allegations concerning the activities of one certain police sergeant."

Garrison goes on to say he was told "about bomb threats directed at our courthouse and of plans to install bugging devices on telephones of elected officials while the building was evacuated."

In the statement bearing his signature, Garrison said that, after receiving this information, "I then went to the County Judge and, through the Judge and the Sheriff's office, funds were obtained and authorization granted to conduct an investigation into the allegations." Various reports from usually reliable sources indicate the amount of funding obtained for this investigative effort ranged from $35,000 to $40,000.

"My investigation," says Garrison, "revealed a pattern of protection of dope dealers and, possibly, participation in drug trafficking by the particular officer," he stated.

The investigation primarily involved two topless bars, the Doll's House on Andrews Highway and the Bunny Club on East 8th Street, and showed, Garrison contends "a long history of close association with persons who were major dope dealers in our community."

In January 1987, Garrison and one of his criminal investigators, Art Allison, arranged for a female informant, a former Doll's House waitress, to make two separate purchases of suspected cocaine from a Doll's House waitress.

Feb. 3, 1987, Allison obtained two felony warrants and a search warrant for a raid on the Doll's House, which resulted in the arrest of the club's manager and a waitress and the seizure of a quantity of marijuana.

Testifying during a May Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission hearing in Austin, Garrison stated, "The buys and busts went down with the knowledge and cooperation of Eric Augeson, who's our DA (district attorney)."

Late Thursday afternoon, Augeson denied this was true, saying Garrison kept the raid "a secret" from him, that he knew nothing about it until he heard about the raid from the media.

Concerning Garrison's allegations that charges against the Doll's House manager and waitress were never presented to the grand jury, Augeson stated Thursday he specifically withheld presentation of the charges to the grand jury at Garrison's request because the county attorney hoped to use the charges "to turn them into snitches," who would provide more information about corruption on the part of a police officer.

Garrison criticized assistant District Attorney Roger Jones because he "sided with topless bar owners and dope dealers" during the May TABC hearings.

But Augeson stated that Jones had been subpoenaed to testify, adding, "it is a blatant lie to say Roger testified for the topless bar."

As to a 70th District Court grand jury hearing earlier this year concerning allegations Garrison's investigation had produced concerning police department corruption, specifically involving Sgt. Terry Tyree, and Garrison's allegation that Augeson tried to "restrict my presence in the proceedings," the district attorney said the county attorney's presence was restricted only because the state statute governing who may be present during a grand jury does not include county attorneys.

Garrison's statement also contains a reference to the fact Tyree lives "in a large home in Country Club Estates, drove a Mercedes Benz, and had recently paid a large amount of money for a new swimming pool. Knowing how drastically underpaid our police officers are," the county attorney stated, "I found this strange indeed."

Augesen said the details of Tyree's home ownership, the expensive car and swimming pool were all explored by grand jurors and that he had communicated all the relevant details to Garrison.

The home in Country Club Estates, he said, was purchased from Jones after Tyree sold, at a significant profit, a home he had owned and paid off over about a 15 year period.

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Title searches to lay groundwork for Lamesa Road project

By RAMONA NYE
Staff Writer

City officials can't notify for two months most of the businesses and homeowners who will have to move because of the Lamesa Road project, as efforts to ascertain who owns what land get underway.

During their regular 9 a.m. meeting Tuesday, the City Council will choose between two realignment plans that will straighten Lamesa with its arterial south of U.S. Highway 80.

Public Works Director Fred Baker will recommended the city choose the alignment that would run through one of the few adobe buildings left in Midland because this plan lines up better with south Lamesa and affects fewer businesses, he says.

The total project is expected to relocate about 15 homeowners, 14 renters and three businesses, according to Nancy Vickrey, a city consultant who is coordinating the project.

Most of the people likely to be tapped to pull up stakes cannot be notified until a title search — expected to take two months — is completed, she said.

However, four business owners who may be affected by the road construction have been notified, she said.

The surrounding eastside community is aware of the Lamesa road project, she said. The project has been explained at several neighborhood meetings this year.

"We're trying to work with the people that are going to be affected," she said.

While several business owners have been contacted about the construction and its potential affect on their property, no homeowners have been approached yet, Ms. Vickrey said.

"Until we actually know where the road is going to go and who owns the property — who the actual legal owner is — we can't talk to anybody," she said.

"As soon as they are identified, we will send them a letter," she said.

Several curious homeowners who called the city already have been told whether they are affected by either of the two plans, she said.

Other homeowners with the same question can call Ms. Vickrey at 683-4281, ext.422.

Once a title search has pinpointed all the owners, individuals will be notified with a letter and invited to accompany an appraiser to view the land before the city negotiates to buy right of way, Ms. Vickrey said.

On July 15, the City Council allocated $767,303 to buy rights to about 195 parcels.

Justification for undertaking the Lamesa Road project was reinforced by a June 1986 Eastside Economic Development Task Force survey of business owners along the street, Ms. Vickrey said. The owners said they wanted the area cleaned up and better street access from Loop 250 and U.S. Highway 80.

"It didn't come from the city down, it came from the community up," said Ms. Vickrey of support for the project.

After the property appraisals — expected to take another two months — are completed the city will set up a meeting with each owner, said Assistant City Attorney Keith Stretcher.

Owners disagreeing with the city's appraisal can appeal and have another appraisal done, he said.

Because of the numerous property owners involved, the city and a few property owners probably will not be able to agree, Stretcher said.

As a result, some owners may have to undergo condemnation proceedings, he said, adding that "We hope the majority of them will agree."

GARY OTT

Some men lend a hand with no thought of financial gain

I can't remember the man's name, and that's a shame. I'd like to give him some credit.

I did thank him profusely and even offered him what little cash I had on me at the time. He refused it. Just shook my hand and said, "Don't worry about it," is all he did. Most decent human beings are like that.

They lend a helping hand because it seems like the thing to do, not as a means to gain financial reward.

I, was headed back to Midland from San Angelo. It was about 8:30 p.m. and the sun was slowly disappearing in the west. The car radio was tuned to a country-western station. What else is new? Conway Twitty, not one of my favorites, was singing, as I recall.

When I first heard the noise, I wasn't sure what it was or where it was coming from. But it was getting louder.

I turned off the radio and air conditioner and tried to gauge the sound better. It was still there. A sick feeling began to sink in.

As I pulled the Renault off the road, I muttered a quick prayer. "Please God, don't let there be anything wrong with my car."

God doesn't always answer your prayers. My dad told me that when I was nine years old. Sometimes you are on your own, he had said.

This was one of those cases.

The sound was most definitely coming from my car.

I became convinced of that fact when I turned off the ignition and the sound ceased. I turned on the ignition again and the sound resumed.

Yeah, I told myself, we've got us a full-fledged problem here. Never say this old boy can't figure out a mystery when he sees, or hears, one.

Unfortunately, he can't change the oil in his car, much less figure out what is causing a weird noise under the hood.

It was a lonely stretch of highway. I had seen, oh, maybe four cars in the past 30 minutes. We were all in our own little world. Now I was in desperate need of a friend.

I lifted the hood, but, of course, had no earthly idea what I was looking for. I turned on the engine and listened to the noise again. It sounded awful. "Why didn't I go to mechanic's school?" I said to myself. I also kicked the left front tire and called it a horrible word. That was a dumb thing to do because the noise wasn't coming from the front left tire. Even I could figure that out. I apologized to the left front tire.

A couple of motorists had passed me while I surmising the situation. Neither had even slowed down, though the first one did honk and wave. I gave him an obscene gesture in return. And I didn't apologize, either.

A few minutes later, as I was contemplating various ways to commit suicide, a green pickup truck zipped past me.

But this one was different. He slowed down, pulled off the side of the road, did a U-turn and headed back my way.

"Well," I thought. "This is it. He's either going to help you or kill you. And, frankly, I don't really care which at this point."

He helped me.

He quickly figured out I didn't know the first thing about cars, so he just sort of took over. He looked under the hood and almost immediately determined what was wrong.

He explained it to me, which was a waste of time. All I remember is something about a bolt coming off, causing something or other to come loose and rattle around, thus creating the weird noise.

It took him all of five minutes to make the necessary repairs.

Still, he was my hero. I shook his hand wildly, slapped him on the back and thanked him repeatedly. I was gushing with sincerity.

He seemed rather embarrassed.

"Look," I said, pulling out my wallet. "All I've got on me is $18. Take it. If you need more, I'll mail it to you."

"Don't worry about it," he said. "All I did was replace a bolt. It's no big deal." Then he got in his truck and drove off.

He was wrong. It was a big deal. And, I wish I could remember his name. I'd send him the 18 bucks, just the same.

Gary Ott is city editor of the Reporter-Telegram.

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